

Well and Onsite Wastewater Facts

or

The things your parents forgot to tell you about living in the country

FSN - 2

Loudoun County Health Department

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There are some important things to remember to make sure that your septic system functions properly, doesn't fail and doesn't end up costing you tens of thousands of dollars to repair or replace. Some of these simple Do's and Don'ts will save you money.

Do's

Pump your septic tank every 3 to 5 years **or** have it inspected every 2 years to determine how it is functioning and if it needs to be pumped.

Avoid overloading the system with water. Always fix leaky faucets and toilets. Spread out the laundry over the course of a week. Use high-efficiency fixtures.

Keep records of the system layout, the permits, inspections and maintenance provided.

Be careful with your garbage disposal, place all grease and as much waste as possible in the garbage to go to the landfill.

Plant only grass over and near the dispersal field and any reserved field. Roots from trees and shrubs may clog or damage a dispersal field.

Don'ts

Don't use your septic system as a trash can. Don't put dental floss, feminine hygiene products, condoms, diapers, cotton swabs, cigarette butts, coffee grounds, cat litter, paper towels, or hair into your system.

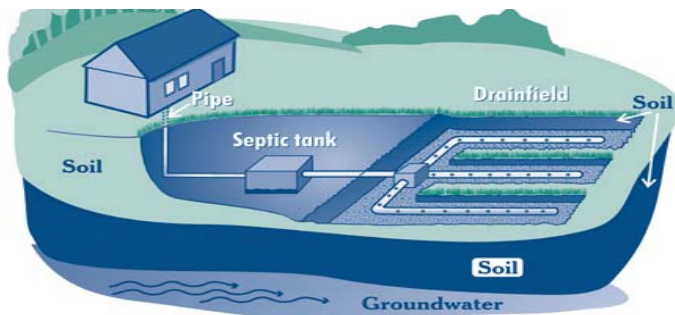
Don't use your system for disposal of hazardous fluids that will kill the microorganisms such as paint or paint thinner, pesticides, and automobile oil. Persons on chemotherapy should consult both their doctor and the health department to determine if special care is required.

Don't use caustic drain openers for a clogged drain. Snake the pipe and/or use boiling water.

Don't drive or park vehicles over any part of the septic system including the dispersal field and reserve. This can result in compacting the soil in the dispersal system or damage the pipes, tank, or other septic system components.

Don't use unlicensed maintenance providers to care for your system.

Don't hesitate to call the Health Department if you have questions.



Septic O&M

Service Desk
703-777- 0234

Environmental Health
Director
703-771-5135

Wastewater Engineering
and Policy Development
703-737-8931

Inspection of Systems
703-771-5802

Planning and Construction
703-737-8739

Operation and
Maintenance
703-737-8931

Recommended Cautions for an Onsite System

The following is a collaborative effort of wastewater professionals to list items, which can cause onsite treatment systems to operate below their potential. These items are known to have caused failures of onsite treatment systems and must be considered if the waste generated by/from a particular site will contain them in excessive quantities. Since excessive is a subjective word; it is highly recommended by National Onsite Wastewater Recycling Association (NOWRA) to share your concerns with a wastewater professional to come up with a treatment strategy for your particular needs.

Inert Materials: Plastic, Rubber, Scouring Pads, Dental Floss, Cigarette Filters, Bandages, Hair, Mop Strings, Lint, Rags, Cloth and Towels do not degrade in an onsite treatment system. Inert Materials (such as Kitty Litter) will build up solids, and lead to system malfunction, clogging or increased pump out frequency.

Paper Products: Disposable Diapers, Paper Towels, Baby Wipes, Facial Tissues, Lotioned, Scented or Quilted Toilet tissue, Moist Toilet Paper, do not dissolve readily in an onsite treatment system. Excessive Amounts of toilet tissue will also not decompose. All can lead to system malfunction, back-up or increased pump out frequency.

Food Wastes: Do not put Animal Fats & Bones, Grease, Coffee Grounds, Citrus & Mellon Rinds, Corn Cobs, or Egg Shells down the sink. Garbage disposal use should be limited to waste that cannot be scooped out and thrown in the trash. Spoiled Dairy Products and Yeasts from home Brewery or Baking may cause excessive growth of microbes that do not degrade sewage.

Household Products: Do not flush Baby Wipes, Lotioned, Scented or Quilted Toilet tissue, Female Sanitary Products, Cotton Balls or Swabs, Condoms or expired Medicines/Antibiotics. Antimicrobial Soaps and Automatic Disinfection Tablets (blue, clear or otherwise) may kill the organisms needed to consume waste.

Additives: USEPA and Small Flows Clearing House have reported that there is no evidence to support the use of additives. Some Septic Tank additives have been shown to do more harm than good. A normally functioning system should not require additives.

Chemicals & Toxins: Certain Chemicals and toxins kill the microbes necessary for Treatment. These should not be placed in an onsite system: Paint, Paint Thinner, Solvents, Volatile Substances, Drain Cleaners, Automotive Fluids, Fuels, Pesticides, Herbicides, Fertilizers, Metals, Disinfectants, Sanitizers, Bleach, Mop Water, Floor Stripping Wastes, Excessive use of Household chemicals, and Backwash from Water Softener regeneration.

Laundry Practices: Onsite systems must process the water as it enters the system. Laundry should be spread out over the week, not all run at one time. Excessive use of detergents, especially those containing bleach, can affect system performance. Liquid detergents are recommended over powders. Fabric Softener sheets are recommended over liquid softeners. Bleach should be used sparingly and at half the rate indicated on the container.

Clear Water Waste: From Air Conditioning Discharge Lines, Floor Drains, Gutters, Whole House Water Treatment Systems and Sump Pumps can increase the flow to your treatment system. These flows can at least disrupt, if not destroy your treatment process.

Medications: People on Chemotherapy or other high levels of medications should notify your wastewater treatment professional to determine a solution for your particular needs.